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346 AND ENVIRONMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

347 STATEMENT OF MICHAEL DOMBECK

348 Mr. DOMBECK. Thank you, Madame Chairman. Mr. Stupak and
349 Radonovich and Mr. Sherwood, it is good to see you again to
350 talk about an issue I know that is very, very important to
351 you and it is very important to us and all Americans. You
352 know this roads and roadless issue that we are talking about
353 is not new, it has been around for a long, long time with the
354 380,000 miles of roads and maintenance backlog of over eight
355 billion dollars. It is an issue that has been around for
356 decades and of much debate here in Congress.

357 And when we get to the roadless side of this issue, John
358 Maguire was Chief in the '70's and he tried to resolve this
359 through a wilderness inventory that evolved into Road 2 that
360 was completed under Chief Max Peterson. It didn't resolve the
361 issue. The first round of forest planning was completed under
362 Chief Dale Robertson, it didn't resolve the issue. Jack Ward
363 Thomas asked that roadless areas be removed from the timber
364 base if managers didn't plan on entering them. That didn't

365 | resolve the issue.

366 | And I have got to say the issue hasn't gotten any easier.
367 | In fact, it is an exceedingly costly issue for the Forest
368 | Service in terms of the controversy appeal and litigation.
369 | And if there is an issue that begs for leadership and
370 | resolution, it is certainly this one. And I think the
371 | interest in this hearing is an indicator of how important
372 | these roadless areas are to people.

373 | Well, why are they important? What is it that people are
374 | so interested in these areas? They have tremendous values.
375 | Clean water, open space, hunting and fishing opportunities,
376 | wildlife habitat, reference areas for research, particularly
377 | as the U.S. gets more developed, anchors for sensitive
378 | endangered species, areas of high bio- diversity,
379 | opportunities for dispersed recreation. And all this is
380 | occurring while the fragmentation and development in the
381 | United States is occurring at an unprecedented level.

382 | From 1992 to 1997, 16 million acres of forest, farms,
383 | open space were developed. That is a rate of 3.2 million
384 | acres a year, or 8.8700 acres per day. And that was an
385 | increase from the rate of development from 1982 to 1992,
386 | which was about 1.4 million acres a year as opposed to 3.2
387 | million acres a year in these past five years. Now the
388 | President has asked us to develop a proposal to protect
389 | roadless areas and I just want to go through a little bit of

390 the process that we have been through and Mr. Lyons will go
391 through more of it.

392 We have been through a scoping process. We are planning
393 an unprecedented level of public involvement, a first round
394 of meetings that will provide your constituents and all those
395 interested, with the data, the maps, the specific information
396 needed to provide their analysis and input into this process.
397 A second round of meetings, one on every national forest plus
398 national meetings will be then conducted to allow people to
399 put that input forward after they have had some time to
400 digest what is going on.

401 We have got unprecedented amount of information on the
402 web. Cd roms will be distributed. The Draft Environmental
403 Impact Statements will be at every Forest Service office in
404 the country. Over 10,000 libraries will house copies of
405 these. We are planning on distributing some 50,000 copies of
406 the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, plus another
407 100,000 copies of the summary. Now I want to reassure Mr.
408 Stupak and others that I know are concerned about the issue
409 of access, that the owners of the national forest will have
410 access to the remaining open space.

411 And we have currently thousands of miles of roads,
412 133,000 miles of trails, 23,000 developed recreation sites.
413 Eighty percent of the elk and bighorn sheep habitat in the
414 United States is on our national forests. One-half of the

415 blue ribbon trout streams in the United States. World-class
416 hunting and fishing opportunities that generate 21 billion
417 dollars to local economies. World- class rock climbing,
418 mountain biking, hiking opportunities and the list goes on
419 and on of opportunities available on our national forests.

420 Over 4,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, 7,700 miles
421 of scenic by-ways, 860 million recreation visitor days with
422 visitation on the national forests growing. This is not an
423 issue about wilderness designation, it is about the future of
424 our remaining large tracts of land. This is not an issue
425 about blocking access. This is about opportunities for future
426 generations and I believe it is time that we provide
427 leadership on the merits of this issue to get on with the
428 debate that has been in front of us for well over 30 years.
429 And I am pleased to be part of this debate and will be happy
430 to answer any questions at the appropriate time.